

## **Acton Community Preservation Committee Minutes for 5/20/03, Library Meeting Room, 7:30 pm-10:15 pm**

Attending: Catherine Coleman, Peter Berry, Walter Foster, Alison Gallagher, Andy Magee (left at 9 pm), Susan Mitchell-Hardt, Mimi Herington , Roland Bartl

Absent: Peter Grover, Chris Shaffner, Joe Nagle

Guest: Don Johnson, Town Manager

### **1. Don Johnson, Town Manager**

Don was asked to explain the town's role and the role of the departments which he oversees in bringing projects forward to the CPC.

Don had questions about the process. When the CPC invited the departments to come in, neither he nor they knew what the process was nor what they were supposed to do. They expect to fund projects through the budget and they are interested in supplanting the budget. Don feels that using CPA funds for projects not in the budget implies the projects are less important. He feels that funds will not get appropriated at town Meeting unless the process is solid, credible, the projects are important, and the BoS supports them.

Don's Process for Developing the Town Budget:

Don and his departments plan for two months prior to attending meetings "on the hill" where he and the staff spend 4-6 days in the Fall off site usually at the Council on Aging. They propose their operating budget, and projects which they will need in the next year and the next 5 years. Budget material is sent out and everything new goes into a prioritized list. The projects they want to fund must be explained and justified; the department heads must prioritize them..

Some of the recent priorities that fall into CPA-fundable categories are

- Repairing the Davis Monument,
- Creating fields on the Morrison Farm
- Creating a parking lot at 2A and 27.

After that they vet the rest of the issues. (They must be sure they have looked at all the issues, costs, and ramifications.) Don reviews the list and makes "managerial adjustments" as needed. The Town Manager's budget then goes to the BoS in December and the BoS can make their own adjustments. In January the BoS review the budget in a meeting with the department heads and the Finance Committee.

They haven't followed this process in two years; they have had extraordinary budgets to deal with. At this point he doesn't know what the department heads are thinking or what to recommend to the BoS with respect to CPA projects.

If they have a list of projects and programs, Don will send the list to the CPC and they will justify it to the committee.

When the CPA passed, their first thought was how to get it on the tax bill in order to get the revenue. They recognized it was necessary to put the CPC in a position to be successful.

- Don commented on how much he and his colleagues appreciated receiving a letter from Anne Forbes the morning after solving the software problems thanking them for their

efforts. The committee further expressed their gratitude of the heroic efforts required and that other towns which passed the CPA, such as Newburyport, were not so lucky to have a dedicated town staff behind them.

- Peter B. stated that the CPC invited the departments for educational discussion not project lists. We needed to know the history, accomplishments and priorities of the boards.

- Alison remarked that it was also a chance for the boards to ask us questions. She also stated that the committee was very pleased that Mr. Johnson could come and speak with us ; and that our goal is to use the money in the wisest way we can.

- Don replied that he will not get between the CPC and the BoS or any other board or committee.

- Andy added that he wanted to make clear that we currently have no formal process. People have been assuming that the CPC will come up with projects, which is not so. We need to develop a program for how people can ask us for money and how we can evaluate proposals. Conflicts will arise such as how to evaluate repairing the Davis Monument vs a project from the Arts Council. Don's job is dealing with department heads; we are required to talk to everyone.

- Don raised the issue of a timing problem with respect to how Town Meeting warrant articles are written at the same time as they prepare the budget. Town Hall might want the repair of Davis Monument, but you might choose the Arts Council project. Which project do we bring to you, the bottom or the top of the list?

- Andy remarked that CP funds may be used for projects which never get funded. Ultimately, we have a BoS representative on the committee so we will be in synch with your process.

- Catherine stated that ultimately the town's people will decide, and prior to that we must hold a public forum so there will not be any surprises.

- Don remarked that as part of the campaign it was stated that now we will have a funding source to go to. If the project is not important enough, how does the CPC look? Peter read the list of projects funded by the Chatham CPC (Nancy Tavernier e-mailed us a list) with the caveat that they have a land bank so land purchases were not emphasized. Some of the things on the lists were: \$100,000 to move historic house; \$90,000 to complete work on Scout Hall; \$175,000 for archival center at historical society Museum; \$40,000 for school playground; \$50,000 for Master Plan for MCI property; \$135,000 for affordable housing down payment program; \$25,000 for a book on Chatham's historic homes; and \$13,000 for administrative costs related to the CPA.

- Walter clarified that Section 6 of the Act states that CP funds should not replace existing operating funds. For example, if the town were to fund Nara Park from its existing operating fund, the CPC could only augment the funds. What it doesn't do is to prevent something that isn't yet funded from being funded such as the Chatham Master Plan.

Regarding the process of prioritization we have the OSRP. There's an additional layer: look at Chatham's mix; there is the 10%, 10%, 10% rule and Recreation. You don't see nuances of the town budget. It could be a hot button. Part of this process is to take the measure of this town and what they want to fund.

- Andy cautioned that no one says out loud that we are taking something off the A budget and running it through the CPA. He envisions most of the projects coming from

the non-profit side and commissions. He doesn't see the Natural Resources Director nor the Recreation Director submitting a proposal; ConsCom and the Rec. Commission each have a representative on the committee.

- Don observed that the Chatham list is exotic except for the playground.
- Mimi questioned if he anticipates the "on the hill" process happening this year? Don replied affirmatively. By November he will give the BoS multiple budgets. They will have less money next year than this year. They had to fund replacement cruisers which have a high level of importance.
- Alison: Recreation Commission may look at safety issues for funding such as lighting leading from the Nagog Office Park trail through the woods to Nara Park.
- Don was asked if there is a stabilization fund for painting Town Hall to which he replied, no.
- Walter reported that he saw an email recommending revoking the CPA and voting in a real estate transfer tax instead to generate revenue. (The Act can be amended at any time). The transfer tax is a home rule petition, and the tax would fall on home buyers. As there are no state matching funds for such a tax, it will not be successful.
- Andy wanted to make the point re: how we will assess projects: If a project comes with some of its own funding, it will likely move up on the list. CP funds could augment those set aside for Morrison Field; we can leverage funds across interest groups to get political investment.

The BoS might say they can't fund a fire truck. The more the CPC can leverage dollars and use multiple funding sources and find more options for partnering, the better it is.

- Don had a question about the Morrison property. (The Morrison Farm is purchased, but the public is not enjoying it.) Building fields there is on the top of the town list. A motion could be written that we will raise \$250,000 from taxes and \$250,000 from CPA to build the fields. Andy pointed out how well it lends itself to multiple uses - the historic structure, with athletic field(s); it would receive the highest ranking.
  - Walter commented about the education session provided by the various open space organizations and how they are the most organized of all the constituencies.
  - Andy commented that they are in a position to bring in more private funds with which to leverage dollars. This might be a concern to Recreation and Historic. Andy added that we should promote the argument that we are buying everything for half price and when one factors in the leveraging of dollars...even less.
  - Catherine asked Don what his advice would be as we go through the process. Don commented about the collapse of the Mass. Miracle of '89 and '90 and they had their "on the hill" meeting and everyone got together. Before then departments were handed down top down budgets and the departments willingly accepted; then they gave the dept. heads votes; they went through 2 or more days of projects. After a few years he noticed skewed votes. Dept Heads had traded votes; that process needed changing.
- Don cautioned the committee about
- Trading votes
  - Credibility
  - Promoting important projects

- Wisely using the public's tax dollars.

Prepare for the argument

- Why waste money on that?
- Why don't you fund this with CPA funds?

Peter B. weighed in that we must

- 1) Write the Community Preservation Plan
- 2) Hold public hearings beginning in the fall
- 3) Invite the public to submit forms and applications.

- Don commented that this is looser than the RFP process and that it will require creating three categories at 10% each.

- Roland raised the issue of the town prioritization process versus the CPA prioritization process. If we were to coordinate 50:50 out of the town budget, when would Don need to know?

- Don replied that normally he would need to know by January; however, this year no funds are available; they can bring priorities.

- Walter indicated that we will follow their table, and that it might dovetail well. He stated that much of what the BoS will discuss will not be CPA fundable.

- The BoS should weigh in and try to make some funding choices.

- Andy observed that Bedford targeted projects in the future, but that their 5-7 year plans raise an issue about flexibility

- Don was asked if he could identify CPA fundable needs and would it be possible to speed up the process? He replied that we don't know if the revenues will come in on target. The end of June and July he will work on three budgets: and close FY'03, work with FY 04, and begin planning the '05 budget with the BoS. It will be August before he will know how they finished up FY 03.

- Andy suggested there could be a lag of one year. For example, the Amended Wetlands Protection Bylaw took two years to reach fruition.

- Don allowed that their process moves slowly to ensure for proper evaluation and discussion before the decisions become permanent.

Payment for Web Designer:

- Peter Berry raised the issue of paying for a website designer. Since we can't appropriate money until Town Meeting, could we write a contract which says that no money is due until it's appropriated.

- Don commented that there has to be a better way and he will try to work it through with Walter.

ACTION:.. Walter gave them a mutual deadline of Friday to work out paying the web designer.

Mimi had a question about paying Roland's salary. Does that also come from the 5% administrative costs and how does that work? Don replied that we can appropriate X dollars which will offset the town salary.

ACTION: We would also like to reimburse the expense for rewriting the software that allowed the CPA tax revenue to be billed.

- Mimi raised another process question about how the actual proposals will arrive in Roland's office, be logged in, copied, collated, kept on file, etc. Time will be needed on an administrative level for someone such as Roland's secretary to perform these tasks.

ACTION: Alison volunteered to take on the job as it is a permissible activity for a committee member.

**2. a. Associate Vacancy**

Wayne Klockner resigned due to overcommitment issues and a new associate member is needed. There is a list on file with the Town Clerk of additional people who volunteered for the position but were unable to be accommodated.

ACTION: Walter will deliver the message to the BoS; he will review the list of 2 or 3 other candidates, and inform the Board in writing; he will let the Volunteer Coordinating Committee know to send the CPC any resumes which might fit our position (Peter Berry doesn't need to do anything).

**b. Possible Future Educational Meetings**

We discussed the possibility for inviting other organizations as part of our educational process, such as the School Committee, Chair, COA, Planning Board,, BoH, Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail committee, Friends of Morrison Farm, East Acton Village Planning Committee etc.

Roland reminded us that we have spoken to the constituencies which we need to and that it is time to focus on getting our drafts of the plan completed.

ACTION: Peter will send out a reminder to email the drafts to each other by 5/31

**c. CPC Future Meetings**

6/3, 7:30 pm, Library Meeting Room. Bring respective drafts of the Plan for discussion (Peter Berry can't attend the next meeting on 6/3. Catherine will chair).

ACTION: Roland volunteered to write a vision statement, the Executive Summary, and "A Brief Introduction to the CPA."

ACTION: Roland volunteered to keep track of appointments, see when committee members positions expire; keep the VCC informed, etc.

6/26, 7:30 pm, Library Meeting Room

**d. Approval of Minutes - 5/01/03; 5/08/03 postponed until next meeting.**

Peter Berry urged us to keep up with the minutes; the BoS will eventually see them.

**e. Misc.**

- Catherine offered her writing skills to the committee, if people need help fleshing out the drafts.
- Process for Soliciting Proposals and Recommending Funding: done
- Peter Berry commented that we have gotten e-mail from real estate appraisers

Respectfully submitted: Susan Mitchell-Hardt